



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Executive Office of Health and Human Services  
Department of Public Health  
State Laboratory Institute  
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Date: November 8, 2004

To: Health Care Providers  
Infection Control Practitioners  
Local Boards of Health

From: Massachusetts Department of Public Health,  
Division of Epidemiology and Immunization

Re: Reporting of Laboratory-Confirmed Cases of Influenza

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As of February 2003, influenza cases confirmed by laboratory tests (either by culture, polymerase chain reaction (PCR) or rapid tests) are required to be reported to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH). In order to streamline reporting and allow for timelier notification, MDPH is implementing a system for reporting cases of influenza detected by rapid methods, culture, and PCR.

Our expectations of the system are that it will provide us with the capacity to:

- Determine when and where influenza is circulating
- Identify what type of influenza viruses are circulating
- Track influenza-related deaths
- Measure the impact influenza is having on hospitalizations and deaths in Massachusetts

It is estimated that Massachusetts has approximately 4,600 excess hospitalizations and over 800 deaths due to influenza each year. It is our hope that the Rapid Influenza Diagnostic Testing Report Form will provide us with preliminary baseline data regarding the burden and trends of influenza disease in our state. Please see below for the two methods for reporting positive influenza laboratory tests.

1. ***Rapid Influenza Diagnostic Testing Report Form*** is a one-page, line list reporting form that captures several essential variables: age, patient's zip code, type of influenza, peak weeks and the zip code of the providers who are ordering the testing. To facilitate reporting, we are asking health care providers, local boards of health and infection control staff to complete the Rapid Influenza Diagnostic Testing Report form on a weekly basis and fax it to the Office of Integrated Surveillance and Informatics Services (ISIS) at (617) 983-6220. Blank *Rapid Influenza Diagnostic Testing Report Forms* and instructions for their completion can be

obtained by calling (617) 983-6801. Please begin using it immediately for all cases of influenza that are positive by a rapid laboratory test.

2. ***Results of Influenza Viral Cultures and PCR*** should be faxed in your routine laboratory report format to ISIS at (617) 983-6813 (Please note: this is a different fax number than the number designated for reporting results of rapid influenza diagnostic testing.)

In addition to the weekly reporting of influenza diagnostic testing results, please continue to report the following significant cases and high-risk situations immediately by telephone to both the local board of health and MDPH (617-983-6800):

- All deaths related to influenza, in children < 18 years of age and pregnant women
- Unusually severe cases of influenza
- Any confirmed or suspect cases of influenza with encephalopathy
- Clusters of influenza-like illness in children, pregnant women or adults
- All clusters of influenza-like illness in long term care facilities or other high risk institutional settings

If you have any questions or concerns or need additional forms, please feel free to contact an immunization epidemiologist at MDPH at (617) 983-6800.

Thank you for your continued cooperation.